Dialogues in Philosophy, Mental and Neuro Sciences

In collaboration with the Section Philosophy & Psychiatry
of the European Psychiatric Association

Crossing Dialogues Association

HISTORY OF MENTAL CONCEPTS

Suggestibility

Eugen Bleuler
University of Zurich (Switzerland)

Excerpt from: Bleuler E. (1912) Affectivity, Suggestibility, State Hospitals Press, Utica (USA): 40-62.

ABSTRACT
Suggestion is not a matter of belief, of credibility, of intellectual communication. It is the action of affects that primarily moves suggestion, which influences bodily functions, dominates the logic so that even nonsense is accepted against all evidence, disassociates contradictory idea-complexes, creates illusions and hallucinations.
Accordingly, suggestion is basically an affective process. The way affects act on suggestion is considered here, in individuals as well as in mass-reactions. The characteristics of suggestibility in hypnosis and in mental disorders is also considered.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Firstly published online:
November 21, 2025

Copyright © 2025 by Ass. Crossing Dialogues, Italy

KEYWORDS
History of psychiatry
Psychopathology
Emotions
Affectivity
Hypnosis

DIAL PHIL MENT NEURO SCI 2025; 18(1):24-36

Suggestion seems in certain respects to resemble the intellectual feelings of Nahlowsky. To believe, to doubt, to guess, to regard as certain, to convince one's self on the one hand, and to accept a suggestion on the other hand, all these express in the same sense the intellectual reaction of our ego to some idea. And yet there is a very important difference between suggestion and the other processes cited. Suggestion goes much further. To believe, to convince one's self, and all these reactions are not able to influence bodily functions, to produce hallucinations, or to so dominate the logic that the grossest nonsense is accepted against all evidence. To be sure the supposition of a danger may produce bodily manifestations, but in an indirect way through the anxiety which it produces; belief causes constantly the acceptation of illogical thoughts and sometimes the appearance of hallucinations, but when this is the case an affect or suggestion also play a part, and indeed belief is scarcely ever free from the action of suggestion (take the case of religion and politics). In such cases therefore the results which go beyond the intellectual sphere are not direct consequences of the intellectual feelings.

Suggestion however produces all this directly. It controls the functions of the glands, of the heart, of the vasomotor system, of the intestines, it disassociates certain idea-complexes from those which are contradictory, it shuts out criticism, rules the senses so that it may readily create illusions, and also positive and negative hallucinations.

As we have seen, exactly the same result may be brought about by the affects. The objective actions of suggestion are therefore the same as those of the affectivity, but different from those of the intellectual processes.

The kind of action, as far as we know anything of it, is also the same. We know that the affective accompaniment of a thought favors the associations which correspond to the affect but renders others more difficult or inhibits them. In this way the acceptance of a thought is favored, critical judgment however is rendered impossible, exactly the same as in the case of a suggestive idea.

If we seek the basis of suggestion we meet similar conditions; we are unable to explain it through intellectual processes, but on the other hand we note the close relationship with what we find in the action of affects.

Bernheim however derives suggestion from credulity (*crédivité*) which every one possesses. Very likely this plays a certain, not unimportant role in intellectual suggestions, particularly those communicated by speech, which are the most frequent among human beings. But the power of suggestion is not to be explained on this basis.

Let us take an ordinary case. A mother tells her child that "the porridge is hot"; the child has already gained an idea of "hot," but in spite of the warning he tries to eat the porridge and burns his mouth. In a million cases that which is said to him will be verified by his own experience. The child must therefore by analogy learn to regard what his parents, his teacher, tell him as, in the main, correct even when individual experiences are lacking. This kind of belief or credulity is a peculiarity of all men and is a *conditio sine qua non* for any educability.

If one regards only the intellectual processes, such an action of credulity may be conceived as a suggestion: one accepts something as the truth without proof or examination simply on the assurance of some other person.

I would prefer not to extend the conception of suggestion so far.

When the parents in the same tone say something to the child that his perceptions or (later) his logical understanding contradicts, it is no longer believed; perception and logic hold their own in spite of the assertion. Just as little can simple credulity influence the movements of the heart or intestines or the glandular secretion; or, in the psychical sphere, dissociate a part of the personality and make it independent, as it were. The influence of credulity is therefore not so far-reaching as that of suggestion.

The peculiarity of the latter we see most clearly in simple conditions. Among all animals living together suggestion plays a great role. If one of a herd is attacked, the danger threatens all the others, or at least it would be better for them to take part in defense or flight. If food is to be found somewhere it is well if the whole herd know of it. Therefore the individual animals show their affect as soon as they scent danger or food. Immediately the same affect with the same expression and with the same movements of defense, flight or acceptance is communicated to the whole herd so far as they can perceive through their senses the affect of their companions.

In this there need be absolutely no intellectual content present; what is suggested is only the affect, the anxiety, the desire to fight, the pleasure of the chase. In higher animals we must also assume that the place and kind of danger or booty is communicated at the same time. But the essential thing can only be the transmission of the affect; the communication of the content, the intellectual part, must play a secondary role. This we see in the dog, for example, an animal which has retained very little of the herd instinct but which is very accessible for suggestion from other dogs. The barking of one awakens similar, *i. e.*, affectively similar, barking in the

whole neighborhood; and yet we stand near enough to those highly developed companions of man to be able, from our observations, to conclude that they can make no accurate communication in that way. We find suggestion in animals only in the case of affects or occurrences associated with affects and we have good grounds for concluding that the animals, the highest classes of certain genera perhaps excepted, communicate only occurrences associated with affects, or we might say, in reality, only affects. The communication or the description of the cause of the affect, in other words of the intellectual part, is probably as a rule unnecessary, at any rate of less importance. (Sometimes it is implicitly contained in the original expression of the affects, that is the direction of flight or the movement of attack).

After the foregoing the *purpose of suggestibility* does not especially need to be further detailed. It causes the whole community to be ruled at the same time by the same affect. It causes the necessary unity of action. It suppresses all other endeavors of single individuals so that the energy of the actions is increased. It gives greater perseverance to the affect and then to the efforts which we make because the individual whose efforts threaten to weaken is again turned to the original task and, on his part, he then strengthens others in the general affects.

Therefore suggestion insures unity and continuity of the affects and actions of a community by pushing all in a certain direction and suppressing opposing efforts. While the affect promotes in the individual all like efforts and associations, strengthens and prolongs them, suggestion does exactly the same for the herd. *It takes care of the collective affect and thereby of the unity of effort and action.* We may add that in man the relation of individuals among one another is determined, in the first place, by the affectivity, even if we leave out of consideration what we call sympathy and antipathy. One can see this in exaggerated form and in caricature, and therefore all the more strikingly, in the insane. With the idiots we deal much as would a father with his child and we are in continual affective relations with them. Alcoholics, general paralytics, manic patients find an affective response with us, not always it is true in a positive sense, but we understand their feelings and may act on them. With the hebephrenic who intellectually often stands much nearer to us than the other dements, we find no affective rapport. We feel towards him like strangers, very much as towards a bird which we pet and which allows us to care for it but never allows the intimacy which we quickly reach, for example, in our relation to the dog. The inhibited and falsified affect-expressions of the hebephrenic place an insurmountable barrier between us and these patients, while all the intellectual derangements of the other groups do not render them so foreign to us.

From this outline it follows:

1. Under simple circumstances affects only are suggested.
2. Suggestion has exactly the same purpose for the community as the affects for the individual.
3. Animals suggest almost only affects. Suggestion in which the intellectual content plays an essential role occurs only in man, and even here is not frequent.

And at the beginning we established:

4. The action of suggestion is shown in the same ways and under the same circumstances as those of affects, whether the suggestion be an intellectual or an affective one.

One may conclude from these facts that suggestibility can not be separated from affectivity. One conception must comprehend both, and we may best call it affectivity. Hence we can express our knowledge thus:

Suggestion is an affective process: Suggestibility is a part of affectivity.

Thus we see that suggestibility, in the original affective form, as well as affectivity in the narrower sense, is active long before the intelligence is. The infant very early understands the affect-expressions of the mother; the affect of the infant not only influences the mother, but suggestion very distinctly acts in a reverse way. If the mother smiles at him the child is also disposed to smile, all the expressions of affection not only make an agreeable impression on him but they influence his mood in the same sense. Reproofs, even when they are not spoken any louder than the pet names, so as to exclude any shock, affect him in the opposite way.

This seems self-evident; but it might be otherwise. Even in the infant therefore, perceptions of affect-expressions cause a similar or the same affect. The child has not only an innate understanding but also an innate resonance for affect expressions. The affect is transferred to the child even in cases in which we can not imagine any intellectual content. With older children it is well known that the play of others as well as their anxiety or weeping is "contagious," etc.

With adults also we can recognize the same thing in all the complications of a civilized life. *Therefore the suggestive transference of feelings is a matter of common observation.*

While, generally expressed, suggestibility is one side of the affectivity, we also see in special instances that it increases proportionately to the strength of the existing affect.

Vigouroux and Juquelier express this general rule in the words "the greater the feeling value of an idea, the more is it contagious."

Though this rule may appear self-evident, it is not always so at the first glance. An affect can naturally render the acceptance of a suggestion difficult as well as easy, according to its direction. The process of rendering a suggestion difficult to accept is also a result of suggestion. We can designate it as a negative suggestion, or as has been done in the case of hysteria as a counter suggestion. The mechanism is exactly the same whether it acts in a positive or negative direction. From an unsympathetic person we accept suggestions with difficulty while one is only too easily influenced by those of a beloved person. Or we receive evil suggestions about a person whom we detest readily, while we reject calumnies about a beloved person.

Although it is easily understood that one who is perfectly indifferent to hypnotism and to the hypnotizer can not be hypnotized, yet the conditions caused by fear of hypnosis are extremely complicated. To be sure hypnosis is impossible in the majority of such cases; an affect does exist, fear, but it acts in a direction contrary to that desired. Fear may, under certain conditions, favor hypnotism in an indirect way. Things which cause the fear remain in the foreground of the interest and inhibit other thoughts, especially when a feeling of impotence comes in. Thus the idea of the thing feared can dominate the subject and drive him towards the very thing which he fears. This is an everyday occurrence which needs no further proof, e. g., the squirrels with the rattle-snake. Further, with fear is very often connected the idea of domination which is accompanied by strong feelings. Such affects, which unfortunately have no name, play a great part in many suggestions.

When, for the sake of experiment we hypnotize a man and suggest to him that he will now see a flower or a mouse, or that after waking he will put a chair on his head as a hat, it is not easy to see the affect which lies at the bottom. The single suggestion naturally does not correspond in such cases to the underlying affect; the latter causes only the acceptance of the suggestion under the given condition. And what kind of an affect is that? Unfortunately we have

no name for it, but no one will doubt that a strong affect underlies the feeling of being dominated or the feeling of authority. This affect can, on the one hand, be gradually traced by imperceptible steps (in the majority of men in relation to other men) to the affect which causes fright palsy; on the other hand, especially in women, in their relations to men, to a sort of love, inasmuch as here the feeling of being dominated has a certain sweetness, which is difficult for a man to understand. Both kinds of conditions are comprehended in the term fascination, the affective meaning of which is, to be sure, not yet clear.

The intellectual as well as the affective feeling of subordination naturally plays a great role in the well known hyper-suggestibility of soldiers (Bernheim and others). Here the influence of habit and training comes into consideration as an important factor. We know that suggestibility may in a certain sense be increased by training, just as we see that the affects are more easily liberated by repetition. By means of practice we are more capable of enjoyment, in the field of art and natural beauty, for example, even when the intellectual comprehension makes no real progress. Later the different influences, which we call collectively blunting, exert their inhibiting effect. In the same way suggestibility decreases after a short time when the suggestor has not resources enough or, as in the case of a medical suggestion, occupies himself always with the same narrow theme, in short if he is unable to keep the interest, i.e. the affectivity, alive.

In the increase of suggestibility by habit there is another factor which must not be forgotten, the simple association through practice, a more intellectual process. For example, a horse is always, in a certain part of the road, made to trot. From now on he needs no more urging; as soon as the animal comes near the place he begins spontaneously to trot. Every German with any education at all will associate with *"Fest gemauert in der Erden," "steht die Form aus Lehm gebrannt."* These are purely intellectual processes and lead finally to automatisms. In the same way the practice of suggestion must lead to facilitation of the process and finally to automatism. Naturally this does not conflict with our views of the affective nature of suggestion but it furnishes an excellent sample of how complicated our mental processes are.

It is easily understood that in the great spheres of religious and political convictions the affects play a great part, yet they often act so indirectly that it may not be out of place to devote a little space to them.

First, do suggestions here play a part? Certainly; from among many reasons we will, however, only mention the following: None of the creeds comprehends the majority of mankind. If any creed be right the majority must necessarily be wrong. It is, however, very probable that no creed is right. That alone shows that logic has little to do with faith. And as a matter of fact political and religious creeds are only in exceptional instances determined by the force of logic, but usually by the faith of the environment, and this in spite of the fact that, in political questions at any rate, there are enough data which would permit any educated person to form a fairly objective judgment. While in the field of religion we find that the dogmas often enough contradict the simplest logic so that one would think they should arouse one's critical sense.

There are many affective factors which give to religious and political influences the irresistible force of suggestion. Here I will only mention their connection with the love for one's parents, with many memories of childhood which have a strong emotional component, with the

most important events in life, and last, but not least, with the care for existence in this world and for salvation in the world to come. What strong affects may originate at a holy shrine where miracles occur can be imagined by any one who tries to render these conditions clear to himself. Thus it happens that more battles are fought for such matters, which are questionable from a logical point of view but which have a great affective value, than for anything else; and that persons who are otherwise of an unblemished reputation may in party strife use rather questionable means. The affect, the suggestion, inhibits here, as elsewhere in life, the opposing associations, the comprehension of the right of other views, the sense of the dubious character of the chosen means of combat.

The role that affectivity plays in *auto-suggestion* is clear. This is aroused only by the influence of strong affects. It is as yet too little observed in healthy individuals because it is much more important in the pathological spheres where it often dominates or even causes disease. Charcot showed the connection of certain forms of traumatic hysteria with fright, which, he claimed, produced the same effect as hypnosis. Since then traumatic neuroses and (functional) psychoses have been attributed to suggestions or ideas with a strong emotional value. The example cited above (page 16 [of the original translation, not reported here]) of the man injured in a railway accident I could have presented as proof of the strength of auto-suggestion as well as of the affectivity. Auto-suggestion as well as suggestion is nothing more than one side of the well known affect mechanism.

It is obvious that also in non-pathological conditions (anxiety, also pleasurable affects) ideas which correspond to the feelings are easily accepted without criticism; for example, one readily interprets every noise into the rolling of a wagon when he is tired and on a lonely road, and thirsty people on the desert see water in every indistinct spot of earth.

The analogy of suggestibility with affectivity is also observed in the fact that when one turns his attention to the mechanism of a suggestion, suggestion is rendered difficult. The similar influence of attention on the feelings is well known, while intellectual processes are, on the contrary, assisted by the exertion of the attention.

This is connected with the much misconstrued and yet so easily verified fact that feelings, as well as suggestion, develop their greatest action in half-conscious and unconscious processes. A person may joke with his conscious mind about the power of suggestion and yet in a large gathering on the simple assurance of some one develop a catalepsy of an arm. If we take into consideration only that which takes place in consciousness we will never be able to understand suggestion, and just as little will we understand the important mechanisms which Freud has pointed out in his studies of hysteria, in dreams, and in every-day life and which dominate a great part of our mental life.

Every observer has noticed that pain-sensations are much more accessible to suggestion than the other sensations. It is much easier to suggest analgesia than anesthesia of any other sense. In hysteria also analgesia is more frequent and more conspicuous than anesthesia. The difference is shown even in the reflexes; all those caused by pain and disagreeable sensations are frequently lacking in this disease, the others almost never. To the former belong the twitching, the changes in respiration on painful stimuli, the reflex closing of the eyelids, the pharyngeal-reflex, etc. We also see the same difference in katatonia which makes use of the same mechanisms as hysteria.

The explanation according to our view is simple. The ordinary sense-perceptions give us information of certain conditions of the outer world, without reference to the meaning of them to our ego. We consciously notice only a small number of the innumerable stimuli which strike our senses, really only those which stand in connection with our momentary object. The same music which captivates us in a concert we may completely exclude when we are writing. The selection of sensory impressions accords with our interests; it is determined by the process which we call attention.

It is entirely different with pain. Pain turns our attention into new tracks, forces it to change its direction. It represents an injury to the continuity of our body and is therefore a most important occurrence for the higher animals. Ordinary attention is powerless against the diverting power of pain, "our best philosophy does not avail against a toothache."

But there are other important interests for the organism which under certain conditions cause suppression of pain. In a fight, in order not to be overcome by one's opponent, one must give little thought to wounds. The hungry man must not consider the trouble of acquisition, in order to gain the booty. The propagation of the species is more important than the preservation of the individual. The male dog suffers hunger and mistreatment for many days if he can in that way approach a female dog in heat. All these important acts are accompanied by lively affects, the strongest affects corresponding to the most important object. Pain, therefore, can only be dissociated by ideas with a strong feeling-tone, or, if we take account only of the latter, by feelings and affects. Hence pain can also be suppressed by any affect; in battle the soldier does not notice that his arm has been shot off; in anxiety one sacrifices something of the continuity of one's body; vanity makes cosmetic operations more or less painless.

Naturally we can not say that in every given case the sensory perceptions are turned to something else by the attention, or that the pain sensation is inhibited by another affect. Everything psychical is too complicated to be expressed by such a simple formula. We must not forget that attention is itself determined by the feelings, and the feelings themselves may be deflected from an important perception and suppressed, etc.; in short, the two kinds of influences are never entirely pure and separate from each other.

Nevertheless we may conclude that if the pain perception can be directly inhibited by feelings, it must also be possible to directly influence it by suggestion, while the sensory perceptions are only dissociated in an indirect manner, and therefore with more difficulty. Perhaps it is also of importance that by the testing of analgesia and anesthesia the attention, which favors the sensory perception, is excited and is a counter-weight against the suggestion of anesthesia, while the pain sensation is much more independent of the attention.

The readiness with which pain is influenced by suggestion illustrates therefore very prettily our view of the close relation of suggestion and affectivity.

There are conditions in which, in spite of the excited affectivity, suggestibility may be suppressed by other factors. *Judgment* is an important counterpoise which, to be sure, may, even in intelligent persons, and in those with strong characters, be dissociated, although this is rare. If the judgment is inaccessible in consequence of a lack of associations, whether this be due to a narrow experience or to stupidity, suggestibility is increased. Thus the grade of suggestibility is, among other things, a (negative) function of the power of criticism, which naturally does not contradict the view of its affective origin.

We have a high degree of credulity, and every idea, whatever its origin, every request from without, every order (this also as a result of education) tends to force us through the mechanism of suggestion to the corresponding action. Therefore judgment would easily come too late were it not for the fact that suggestion has an automatically acting counterpoise at its side, a primary tendency to turn aside influences from without. This mechanism, to which as yet little attention has been paid, together with the positive forces (including suggestion), regulates our actions as antagonist and agonist, and is one of the roots of pathological negativism as well as the basis of contrary suggestion which plays such a great role in the symptomatology of hysteria and other diseases.

It is in suggestible people that we see this warding off mechanism mostly developed and active in the most unsuitable conditions. Children and hystericals, for example, are generally, under certain conditions, and each in his own way, markedly obstinate and headstrong. This may represent in part a protective mechanism but in another be analogous to emotional lability, the expression of an especially strong oscillation around the position of equilibrium. Since the equilibrium here as in many other places is maintained by two antagonistic forces, we may also consider the condition of increased suggestibility associated with the increased inclination to negation as a separation of the yet unknown fundamental property into its (negative and positive) ions.

In order to fully illustrate the connection between suggestibility and affectivity, we should be able to prove what kind of emotional makeup, what "temperament" is most favorable for suggestion. Unfortunately we can not do this. Most of the preliminary conditions for such an investigation are lacking. Suggestibility, as intelligence, is not a uniform quality; in certain directions a man is strongly suggestible, in others not at all or very little. It is impossible or very difficult to divide mankind according to their suggestibility, even when we have good cause to designate certain persons as very suggestible and others as little suggestible. We are even at a greater disadvantage when we try to classify the affects or the different types of the emotional makeup. Here we know only a few mainlines, e.g., the type of affectivity which in excess leads to mania and that which leads to melancholia, and we know these only very superficially. There are probably sides of the emotional life which we divine more than we know, yet which probably play an important role. I would refer to the types mentioned and add that many people have a tendency to suppress their disagreeable affects, *i.e.* as far as possible separate them from their personality, while others perfectly amalgamate them with their actual personality but they seem at different times to be different personalities; the one dissociates, as it were, the affects from his personality, the other dissociates his personality according to the different affects. To me it is probable that the former are, other things being equal, little suggestible while the latter class is accessible in a high degree either to suggestion or auto-suggestion or both.

Furthermore we know that children with their lively affectivity (and undeveloped power of criticism) are very suggestible. In manic patients with the same temperament we see similar conditions. We know that the affects in melancholia inhibit the associations and the suggestions in all directions which are contrary to the inner feeling but assist those in harmony with it, (religiously indifferent melancholies in a religious atmosphere also acquire religious fears). With general paralytics, suggestibility as well as the affectivity, is increased and is further increased by the loss of the critical faculties. In dementia praecox we do not know as yet what

kind of feeling-derangement is present. In paranoia (Kraepelin's) we have a mixture of facilitated and inhibited suggestibility. In the traumatic neuroses and psychoses, fright and different apprehensions cause the symptoms by suggestion and auto-suggestion. But this is as far as we can go even here. In the suggestion disease par excellence, hysteria, we know little of that which we should know to look upon suggestibility and affectivity from the same point of view. Nevertheless it is certain that in hysteria the affects play a great role so that one may refer the hysterical derangement as well to the dissociating action of the feelings as to the so-called autosuggestion, for *auto-suggestion and affect-action here appear identical* .

Even leaving out of consideration the mental diseases, the momentary disposition plays a very great role in suggestibility. The inhibitions and facilitations may be intellectual but generally they are affective. Bodily diseases too, with their action on the affectivity, of course, influence suggestibility (vide the persons who influence invalids into making wills in their favor). Exhaustion as is well known causes the same thing. Here is an example: A very intelligent and especially impartial and objective head-nurse returned in an exhausted condition from a journey. A nurse met her and informed her in an excited and disapproving tone that a certain nurse had been made assistant head-nurse. Like the nurse, she thought that the choice was a misfortune for the institution and an injustice to another aspirant to the place. She had completely forgotten that she had previously approved of the choice and could not take into consideration the fact that the nurse had only accepted the position after the other candidate had taken it and had resigned. For years the head-nurse could not resume an objective attitude towards her new assistant, and although, from time to time, she admitted that I had acted entirely in accordance with our agreement she never could quite forgive me. Grounds for jealousy were entirely lacking in this case. (In contradistinction to what happens in paranoia, the delusion has not broadened out).

The matter becomes more interesting when we leave the suggestion of the individual and take up mass-suggestion, although here too we have nothing complete to offer, for the psychology of mass-suggestion, in spite of several attempts, remains yet unwritten.

Individual suggestion, especially as far as it has intellectual content, is a miserable artificial product which outside of human conditions has little influence.

Suggestion with a larger complex of individuals is very different. Here it corresponds to its original aim, the shaping of a strong collective-affect and develops also its elementary power for good as well as for evil.

A great mass in itself inspires strong feelings, even an inanimate mass such as the pyramids, Mont Blanc, the sea; but not so much as an animate. Scarcely any one can deny the imposing impression of a great unified mass of men. The enthusiasm for the army would certainly be much less if one always saw only individual soldiers. The oath of an individual can at most through especial accompanying circumstances be awe-inspiring, while the oaths of 14,000 citizens of the Landsgemeinde in Appenzell-Ausserrhoden is in itself one of the most stirring spectacles which one can see.

Mass action, especially when the suggested individual forms a part of the mass, causes a strengthening through the bare number of suggestors, which must act in a manner similar to the frequent repetition of an assertion. At the same time, to a view which is shared by many, more credence is given instinctively and with a certain right than to one which only a single person

believes. Again, the individual who is a part of such a human complex perceives on all sides sensory perceptions which support suggestion, while those that invite criticism are entirely lacking or are present in unimportant numbers.

The feeling of the power, even of the irresistibleness, of a large number is also an important factor, and especially the fact that many inhibitions which would naturally tend to counteract the power of suggestion are removed, such as embarrassment of the individual who so rarely has a desire to act differently from the environment. The same feeling of being different from the rest which in the individual hinders suggestibility forces the masses, influenced in the same sense, to an acceptance of the suggestion. The diminution or the removal of the feeling of accountability for acts and thoughts diminishes further the ethical and intellectual inhibition, the regard for others, as well as the personal judgment.

Thus a collection of individuals has another, in many respects a much lower, type of ethical standards than the individual. One can see indications of this even in small committees, but for larger bodies the old proverb *Senatores boni vivi, senatus autem mala bestia* is always more or less applicable. That the ethical standards of parties, and of States does not come up to even modest requirements of the individual is apparent to every one. The latter also has another reason: ethics regulates the behavior of the individual in regard to his actions in the community of which he is a part and by which he is protected. The relation of individual countries to others is a much looser one, and it is therefore lamentable but explicable that the finer ethical considerations play a relatively small part in international, or, for that matter, in national politics. From a utilitarian standpoint, which at the same time represents the phylogenetic point of view, ethics is not so necessary in a collection of individuals as with a single individual. The bad consequences of a wrong act, (punishments!) are for the culprits generally much less or can not include all the participants.

The number of such factors to which a strengthening influence of masses on suggestion must be ascribed might be increased. The essential thing, however, will be the development of suggestion from conditions of a large unit of individuals, or, the phylogenetic adaptation of the function to the mass. Thus it is easily understood that a community not only thinks and feels uniformly, but that it can be much more easily led by an individual than a single person, as soon as this individual has found an affective assonance in a great number of the individual members of the community.

Thus a comparatively poor teacher, even an inexperienced kindergarten teacher, can control fifty children comparatively easily while the parents, even if they are capable, may have trouble in directing one of them.

If we glance over the *action of suggestion* as it is described in books on hypnotism we can compare it step by step with affectivity.

In the sensory sphere we daily see the dissociation of perceptions by the affects. One overlooks during an affect, many occurrences, even severe injuries to the body but in both cases the anesthesia is a systematic one not limited to a definite sense organ. We suggest anesthesias of all the senses. On the other hand the affects allow us to utilize occasional perceptions which otherwise we would not perceive because they are too weak, i. e., suggestion may cause hyperasthesia. The affects as well as suggestion cause illusions and hallucinations. The motility is influenced by affect and suggestion in the same way, paralyses and cataleptoid conditions on

the one hand and extraordinary muscular power on the other are engendered by anxiety as well as in hypnotic experiments. Both functions also dominate the involuntary musculature, the blood vessels, intestines, bladder, etc.

Affects and suggestions dominate the actions of all of our vegetative organs, the heart, lungs, vessels, glands, menstruation and many other functions. The influences on metabolism and sleep also must not be forgotten.

They influence our memory; we forget or transform what is disagreeable and keep more vivid what is agreeable. We find memory-illusions in normal individuals as soon as affects come into consideration; they are more frequent, however, in the insane whose inner life is dominated by strong affects, and we produce them very easily by suggestion.

Our whole logic is controlled by affects in exactly the same way as by suggestion; both render criticism difficult or impossible.

The affects change our personalities. In many respects we act differently in sorrow than we do in joy, and by suggestion we can also modify the character of a person.

In the domain of pathology we can not separate the actions of the affects from that which is correctly called auto-suggestion. Whether an hysterical is delirious because she dissociates the pain caused by the loss of her husband with all that is associated therewith or because she makes the auto-suggestion that he is not dead is irrelevant. It is only a different term for the same process. The wish-dreams of normal individuals and the wish-deliria of the insane are nothing but the consequences of auto-suggestion; they may, however, also be described as actions of the affects which in sleep and in delirious conditions dominate the associations.

Attention, whether it is conscious or unconscious, is controlled by "interest" and other affects. We control it, however, just as well by suggestion. We dissipate it in a hypnotized person who is in rapport only with his hypnotizer in exactly the same way as it is in the case of the savant who, busied with some problem, does not notice the storming of his house.

The suggestions *à échèance* are also referable to attention. If we set ourselves to do something at a certain time or at the occurrence of a certain event the attention is consciously or unconsciously focused on this event, or on this time. At the same time, however, the event is associated with the act to be performed.

Associations and inhibitions are therefore put in readiness for impressions which are expected in exactly the same way as the attention does it for actual as well as for future experiences. That the attention is directed by the affectivity has already been mentioned and is perfectly obvious. The suggestions *à échèance* therefore need no further explanation.

Perhaps it is necessary to add, however, that, as everywhere in psychological matters, different ways lead to the same end and that practically the result is never influenced by one mechanism only. One therefore finds many other influences acting with suggestion.

The latter may be elucidated by an analysis of the action of the suggestive questions.

Stern in his "*Psychologie der Aussage,*" asks how the suggestive questions act and has "explained" it as being the imitation of the mental attitude of another. But why imitated in one case and not in another? That is, why does not every suggestive-question act in a suggestive manner. Simply because in one case an affect is present, in the other case not. What kind of affects come into play can not be generally stated. They are the different affects which the child has before his teacher, or the witness has before the judge and the whole situation of the trial.

But other things come in. By the tone and form of the question the answer can be suggested. It is unpleasant to have a different opinion not only from that of one's superior but of anyone else, and we instinctively avoid the disagreeable. Thus the questioner leads the associations in the intimated direction. The simple credulity which we differentiated from suggestion may also play a great part. Further, the refusal of the insinuations which lie in the question requires a certain independence of character and imagination which is not at the disposal of everyone. In order to answer the question whether a dress was blue or yellow by saying it was "neither blue nor yellow but red" requires an independence of mind of which many men are not capable, while if the indifferent question were asked, "what color was the dress?" the same men would have perhaps answered quite correctly, "red" (Stern). The suggestive question presents a definite set of ideas. This is of importance, partly in a direct way, because the person questioned feels more or less forced to operate with the material offered to him, partly indirectly "because owing to the natural inertia he hesitates from voluntarily amplifying the whole procedure of question and answer." This is the case in the question, "what colored dress did the woman wear?" when it was not yet determined whether a woman was present or not.

Of course the number of co-operating motives is not exhausted by these allusions. Stern also emphasizes the importance of the tone of the question. "The strongest suggestive question can, if asked in an uncertain timid voice, lose every suggestive force; the most harmless question asked in an impressive tone accompanied by a fierce look and repeated with ever-increasing loudness of voice may become a mental torture which brings forth any desired answer." We must also remember that we all have an instinctive feeling of compulsion to react to any question, or to anything which is said to us. One can conceive this quality to be similar or identical with suggestion; in both cases it is a matter of an emotional and intellectual rapport between two individuals, yet it is not entirely the same, whether the primary individual provokes in another simply his own convictions and his own feelings or whether he calls forth a complement of his feelings or thoughts.

When we attempt to explain the phenomena of suggestion we dare not entirely ignore hypnotism, although this comprises only a small part of that which we designate by the name suggestion.

Here we have first to state that there is not one hypnosis but a whole mass of conditions to which we give this name. What is common to all of them is a more or less complete exclusion of the critical attitude. But an hypnosis as conceived by Liêbault is very different matter from an hypnosis in the Salpêtrière, the hypnosis of Braid and Mesmer differs from the modern hypnosis. "The suggestors" of the modern shows produce again other conditions. Whoever has seen a little of it knows that with the same technique the condition of hypnosis changes with every hypnotist and every hypnotized person.

Therefore what is essential is that the critical attitude is excluded by some sort of emotional impression, by fascination, domination, fright, or by a suggestion which depends on these affects. All other symptoms of hypnosis are accidental suggestions or accidental special reactions of the individual which may vary from case to case. Whether the subject is "conscious" or not, whether he is in a sleeplike condition, whether he has amnesia afterwards, all these are entirely irrelevant matters and depend on accidental or consciously given suggestions.

When the school of Nancy finds a resemblance between hypnosis and sleep, it is as easily understood as is the fact that others did not see it. Liêbault expressly suggests sleep and to the medium there remains nothing else but to imitate sleep as well as possible.

The exclusion of the critical attitude by the affects and also by suggestion is of every day occurrence and we need say no more of it. The exclusion of other idea-complexes we see not only as the action of the affectivity in a narrower sense but also as a consequence of attention. Thus there are no phenomena of hypnosis which can not be explained by a simple inhibition and facilitation in the same way as they are caused by the affects. But, in hypnosis it is easy to bring about exaggerated results, i.e., to produce more than is needed; the affects may potentially do the same but actually do so in exceptional cases only, i.e., only in very profound emotional impressions.

REFERENCES

Binswanger O. (1904) Die Hysterie. Hölder, Wien.

Bleuler E. (1904) Die negative Suggestibilität ein psychologisches Prototyp des Negativismus, der contraren Autosuggestion und gewisser Zwangsideen. Psychiatrisch-neurologische Wochenschrift.

Freud S. (1905) Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie. Deuticke, Leipzig und Wien.

Stern LW. (1905) Beiträge zur Psychologie der Aussage. Barth, Leipzig.

Vigouroux A, Juquelier P. (1905) La contagion mentale. Doin, Paris.